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The content validity in the design of a questionnaire on school coexistence

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Abstract

Having as the main purpose the design of a questionnaire to find out the situation about school coexistence, teachers' training and their formative needs, a comparative analysis of 11 questionnaires on school coexistence aimed at teachers was carried out. In addition, a panel of experts to guarantee its content validity and the appropriateness of the study was included. The questionnaires, which have 27 questions on average with a predominant qualitative-quantitative combination in their form, are focused on the analysis of the teacher-student relationship, the kind of conflicts and the level of disputes. They do not analyse, however, teachers' training needs. Experts consider teaching staff as the main responsible for the creation of a beneficial school environment, apart from being the principal factor in the origin of conflict (91%).

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1. Scientific production about the situation of school coexistence.

In recent years, many have commented about school coexistence and problems arisen from it, affirming that this is not an unfamiliar phenomenon that, besides, directly and indirectly concerns the whole educational community. In fact, this situation has given rise to numerous initiatives to understand what is occurring in our schools, what are the problems coexistence prompts, as well as their causes, factors and consequences. We begin with several studies. Vieira, Fernández and Quevedo (1991), in the Community of Madrid, with a sample of 1,200 students of primary education, found that 17.3 % noted having intimidated their schoolmates, and 17.2% stated they had been intimidated, normally through verbal abuse (19.3%), theft (13.9%) and physical intimidation (12.7%). These statistics were confirmed by Cerezo and Esteban (1992), who found that in the schools of the Region of Murcia, 11.4% of the students (minors from 13 to 15 years old) rated themselves as aggressors whereas 5,4% did so as victims.

However, since the year 2000, most of research has departed from the results of the ombudsman's report about school violence in Secondary Education (1999-2007), due to the wide range of communities and schools included in his research, which checked the statistics of previous studies showing that 3.9% of students claimed that they have been victims of a schoolmate, 27.1% of students indicated that they have been the target of insults, and 10.5% have been the focus of social exclusion. This research was supported by Hunter, Mora-Merchán and Ortega (2004) who pointed out that, with respect to the prevalence of coexistence problems, in particular bullying between two students, 48% of boys and 45% of girls experienced or suffered it during their school attendance. Other research introduces similar percentages in which 57.6% of students claimed that they had suffered some kind of physical, verbal or psychological aggression at least once during the first term of the year, and 38.3% admitted they had bullied other schoolmates during the same period of time (Ramírez and Justicia, 2006).

In 2007, the Cisneros X Report about violence and bullying provided relevant information the situation of coexistence in the schools of 14 autonomous communities from Primary to High School Education. It put forth the high percentage (39%) of students at risk of some kind of violence in educational institutions, occurring with high frequency in the second year (41.40%) and the third year (43.60%) of Primary Education, principally taking form of assignment of nicknames (13.90%), rejection (10.40%), mocking at possible errors (9.30%) and insults (8.07%); these behaviors result in psychological problems related to self esteem (57.2%), depression (54.8%) and post-traumatic stress symptomatology (53.7%) among others (Cisneros X Report, 2007). These statistics simulate those given by the first national research about school coexistence carried out with the purpose of identifying the opinion of both teachers and students. That research stated that 28% of the students consider that they often receive insults, and 9% claim to be hit frequently; in addition, 67% of the teachers identify lack of respect towards the teaching staff as the more frequent behavior in their educational institution (Ministry of Education & UNESCO, 2005).

At present, new findings about the state of coexistence in our educational institutions have allowed us to confirm that conflicts not only originate within groups of equals, as it is within the school system where conflicts of different natures originate. These conflicts are firstly related to the educational system itself and its internal running, mainly due to academic fraud, imposition of school rules, and the disruptive behaviours in the classroom and the school. Secondly, conflicts also originate in disputes among peers, principally due to verbal violence and disagreement. Finally, they too have their origin in the student-teacher relationship, in which the teaching staff is the main subject in conflict due to academic demand and hostilities that stem from their teaching authority.

This outlook demonstrates the need for interventions to prevent actions that contradict democratic coexistence, principally in educational institutions. And at the same time, the report by the National Union of Teaching Staff in Spain (ANPE, 2003) notes that 23.4% of the teachers claim that they often encounter problems in their classrooms, 20.2% feel unprotected and demand a specific academic training, and 81.7% admit that they have never been qualified to solve conflicts. Shortages like lack of space, overvaluing of didactic strategies, and insufficient methodological experience of teachers for improving school coexistence, demonstrate training needs of the teachers, who, despite having acquired some kind of training (89%), admit not having received academic training about school coexistence in their initial training (67%) or during their professional practice stage (71.30%) (Jares, 2006). In accordance with these issues, the research carried out by López and Domínguez (2009) shows that 60.7% of the teachers consider resolving problems related to no-coexistence in the school as unsatisfactory, whereas 88.6% assure that the present disciplinary measures are inadequate; in addition, academic training needs for the teaching staff is perceived as urgent because 82.1% admit they have never received specific training about school coexistence and they demand intervention proposals which could promote appreciation and respect toward the leading figure of teachers, increase of their authority and counseling.

2. The questionnaire

The questionnaire is a technique of assembling information frequently used in scientific-educational research, both quantitative and qualitative. It allows us to collect in a systematic way the required information depending on the variables of the research; and at the same time the questionnaire helps to specify our purpose of study (Hueso & Cascant, 2012). Moreover, questionnaires are simple to apply, and they offer diverse criteria for answers that are

subsequently quantifiable (Cabrero, 2013). These are enough reasons to consider the questionnaire as a principal instrument for our research. For its elaboration we rely on a process of systematic stages established by Armando (2007), who considers that every questionnaire should take them into account:

Defining the construct. School coexistence is considered an essential part of the educational process due to its close relationship with learning and training for democratic citizenship, which stands on the relationship among all institutional factors (Banz, 2008), and where conflicts of various sorts appear inevitably: disputes of efficiency related to the curriculum, interpersonal conflicts, those about relationships, and conflicts of power common to institutional rules (Viñas, 2004, quoted in Aznar, Cáceres, and Hinojo, 2007:165). Coexistence and conflicts are tightly dependent constructs that force us to get rid of negative connotations that have been built up around the second of these. Conflicts do not always damage coexistence, but they are part of it, of the daily nature of school. Thus, conflict consists of personal and social links which are located in the perseverance of diverse groups or individuals who feel frustrated to increase their share of gratification (Coser, 1970; Bazdresch, 2009). This situation gives rise to controversial and divergent circumstances where there is opposition of interests, needs and/or values in disputes (Cascón, 2001). In brief, the problem does not lie in conflict itself, but in the way people confront and manage it. From this positive outlook, coexistence acquires several characteristics which specify what it means and it is now understood as a series of practices and habits about inclusion or dismantling, collaboration or subordination, peaceful or violent solutions to differences among people (Fierro, 2013).

Settling on the population. The aim of our research is to find out the formative needs of teachers in school coexistence, having, therefore, teachers as the main addressee of our questionnaire. The population has been restricted to the teaching staff of the Secondary level, as that is the level when there are greater coexistence problems, considering both public and private educational institutions from different towns in the Region of Murcia.

Describing in detail the structure and the form of the questionnaire, number of items, sequence and order, and type of coding. In order to widely cover the questionnaire design stage in a systematic way, we turned to an analysis of questionnaires on school coexistence aimed at the teaching staff which allowed us to gather information about the content as well as the formal aspects to bear in mind for the elaboration of our questionnaire. Then we went on to develop a panel of experts with the main purpose of gathering data about the aspects we should include as the essential content in the questionnaire. Since this article presents results from both processes, this phase is yet to be defined.

3. Methodology

The aim of our research is “to find out, from a teaching perspective, what is the situation of coexistence in educational institutions, and analyze the teachers’ formative needs about this subject.” It consists of research with a descriptive nature where the questionnaire is the instrument to gather information. Hence one of the operative objectives we have developed is the design and implementation of a questionnaire that will allow us to: find out the phase of school coexistence (the positive and negative factors, the level of disputes, the diverse factors leading to conflicts,...) and at the same time identify formative needs (previous training received, teachers’ competence about school coexistence, topics they would like to receive information about,...). In order to know the appropriateness and the need to design our questionnaire, as well as the granting of forma criteria, an analysis of standardized questionnaires about school coexistence was carried out, as they have been used in research for the last decade. This process was suggested with the principal aim to find out the information units, present and absent in the instruments about school coexistence (Terminology: variables and their relation with the objectives; Structures, order and kind of questions involved), thus applying qualitative methodology. In order to select the sample, the ISOC database was consulted to get a wider representation of research on school coexistence aimed at teaching staff and with standardized and validated instruments. The research departed from fundamental descriptors applying the terms “school coexistence” and “teachers’ training”. In terms of inclusive criteria, we took into account that the references were of an empirical nature and the instruments had teachers as the main addressee. The final sample was made up of a total of eleven questionnaires about school coexistence aimed at teachers; these references have been included in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample

Questionnaires	Authors	Code
Questionnaire for teachers on the initial state of school life (1).	Ortega, R.; Del Rey, R. (2003)	C1
Questionnaire for teachers on the initial state of school life (2).	Ortega, R; Del Rey, R, (2003)	C2
Centre climate questionnaire and classroom teachers.	Fernández, I; Andrés, S; et al (2012)	C3
Questionnaire for teachers.	Bahillo (2004)	C4
Questionnaire for teachers.	Ortega, R; Mora, J.A y Mora, J. (1995)	C5
Questionnaire on school life for teachers and professors.	Ortega, R y Del Rey, R (2005).	C6
Teacher Questionnaire.	Ortega, R y Del Rey, R (2000)	C7
Head of Secondary Studies Questionnaire.	Defensor del pueblo (2007).	C8
Coexistence Questionnaire for teachers and professors.	Ojeda, R (2012)	C9
Teacher Questionnaire.	Fernández, I (2012)	C10
BULL-S: Assessment Test of aggression among schoolchildren. Form P (Teachers).	Cerezo, F (2000)	C11

Afterwards, in order to establish content validity, we created a panel of experts, which required the design of a qualitative instrument consisting of 7 open questions categorized and sequenced depending on the objectives (to identify the aspects of a positive and negative perception in primary and secondary education, to enumerate the kind of conflicts and their consequences, to determine the factors that cause scholar conflicts, to find out the educational measures in schools and the teaching strategies to improve school coexistence, as well as to detect the competences that should be the basis of the teachers' training for this area). The sample came to 30 guest experts who fulfilled the following requirements: being professors at university and also versed in the subject or experts on the observation of school coexistence. All of them received the instrument up to a maximum of three times to guarantee completion. In the end, however, 12 experts completed it (40% of the sample participants), ten from the university field with the category of doctorate, and two from coexistence observatories. There is a wider predominance of males than females among the experts (50% of the including sample), in the same way the majority are located in the autonomous community of Murcia (83% of the final sample) and the rest are from Andalucía (17%). All of them are specialists in school coexistence and they have several publications and studies on that subject. Once the completed panel results were collected, we analyzed the data qualitatively rather than statistically, in a series of stages (Fernández, 2006): enumeration and coding; organization and transcription; categorization; coding and re-counting; and explanation of the results, all of which allowed us to gather a great amount of qualitative information to delimit the indicators we should take into account in each dimension of the questionnaire and reformulate it.

4. Results of the validation process

4.1. Results obtained from the comparative analysis of the questionnaires on school coexistence aimed at the teaching staff.

The first analysis considering the *bibliometric indications*, allowed us to check that the majority of questionnaires that have been analyzed are characterized by an individual authorship (36.36%) or double authorship (36.36%); only in a few cases the authorship surpasses two authors. From the totality of authors, 77.77% are female. With respect to the registration, a greater production in the Andalusian universities was confirmed, in particular the University of Seville (31.25%), the University of Córdoba (31.25%) and the University of Granada (12.5%), and to a lesser extent the Autonomous University of Alcalá de Henares, Salamanca, Zaragoza and Murcia. Regarding productivity, the years with a higher performance of publications were the years 2000 (18.18%), 2003 (18.18%) and 2012 (18.18%)

The second analysis of the designation for the questionnaires leads us to conclude that 90.90% of the

questionnaires refer to the teaching staff as the main agent of the research and to whom the instrument is addressed, 27.27% refer to coexistence and only 9.09% represent conflict, atmosphere, aggressiveness and violence.

On the other hand, the *analysis of form* shows that a high percentage reflects the main purpose of the questionnaire (81.82), but without making reference either to anonymity nor the criteria to fill it in (63.64%). In all the questionnaires the principal addressee is easily identified and as a result that of the research, too. Only 45.45% express gratitude for collaboration. According to the questions, the average number in each questionnaire is 27 questions, dominating the combination of open and closed questions (54.55%) in contrast to those questionnaires which present exclusively closed questions of quantitative nature (45.45%). All the questions have been numbered in 90.90% of the cases. They are not, however, distributed in blocks or thematic sections (90.90%), except for the case of the data identification which in 63.64% of the questionnaires are presented in a different section, bearing in mind aspects such as the name of the school and the date (45.46%); the district, gender, age, level of education they teach, names and surnames (27.27%). Moreover, items such as years of teaching experience, years in that school and the personality of the educational institution (18.18%), and at least extent variables as the level of studies, other works, field of study, size of the habitat, level of studies taught in the school and the status achieved by the teacher in the school (9.09%).

A more detailed analysis, centered in the *analysis of the content* frequently shows the high percentage of authors who make reference to tension in the school in their instruments, precisely 100% introduce questions that made them recognize the relationship between the student and the teacher, 81.82% about the kind of conflicts, the relationship between students, teacher and family-school, 72.73% about the amount of conflicts in their schools and classrooms, 45.45% about where they took place and their seriousness, and only 36.36% the factors were considered instigators of school conflicts. At least extent, questions related to the mechanism of conflict management were suggested, although 45.45% considered as a crucial need to know if one of those mechanisms could be participation of the families in coexistence in educational institutions, 27.27% considered cooperative work among teachers, support for the teaching staff, teaching authority, and 18.18% considered compliance of the normative, development of projects, greater teachers' training, school initiatives and favour participation of the students in the resolution of conflicts. In terms of the aspects linked to teaching action in a coexisting atmosphere, some questions brought up the practice of suspension and communication to the head master (54.55%), dialogue and individual resolution (45.45%), problems to keep discipline, communication with families (27.27%), tutorial action, participation of the teacher in school activities, students involvement to solve problems (18.18%). The role of the families is highlighted in the improvement of coexistence (45.45%) and of the Executive Team of the school (27.27%).

4.2. The results obtained from the panel of experts about school coexistence.

We should highlight aspects of our results which contribute the most to create a negative atmosphere in the teaching institutions as the teaching practices and the way authority is established, together with the presence of violent behaviours both physical and verbal. The causes of school conflicts were mainly related to school, family and social factors (91.66%, 58.33% and 66.66%), but not that much to personal and emotional factors of individuals (41.46%). Moreover, the effects were closely linked to the instructive deterioration and that of the relationship among agents in the school community (83% and 75%). The educational measures aimed at pupils were considered essential for the improvement of school coexistence. However, a major importance was given to the measures carried out at the institutional level in the school and also those addressed to the teacher to manage coexistence, especially in the transmission and implementation of intervention and prevention strategies (91.66%). (Table 2)

Table 2: Results of the expert panel.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS	YES	NOT	TYPES OF VIOLENCE	YES	NOT	TOTAL
Absence of values	2 (16.7%)	10 (83%)	Vandalism and property damage	3 (25%)	9 (75%)	100
Regulation-standards	2 (16.7%)	10 (83%)	Physical violence	8 (66,66%)	4 (33,3%)	100
Scarce family implication	2 (16.7%)	10 (83%)	Verbal violence	7 (58,33%)	5 (41,6%)	100
Teaching practice	3 (25%)	9 (75%)	Psychological violence	1 (8,33%)	11 (92%)	100
Authority	3 (25%)	9 (75%)	Bullying	9 (75%)	3 (25%)	100
Indiscipline	2 (16.7%)	10 (83%)	Problems between teachers	2 (16.7%)	10 (83%)	
FACTORS	YES	NOT	EFFECTS	YES	NOT	TOTAL
School	11 (91,66%)	1 (8,33%)	Impairment instructive	10 (83%)	2 (16,7%)	100
Social	7 (58,33%)	5 (41,66%)	A middle level	4 (33,3%)	8 (66,6%)	100
Family	8 (66,66%)	4 (33,3%)	Physical and psychological mismatch	2 (16,7%)	10 (83%)	100
Individual / Emotional	5 (41,66%)	7 (58,33%)	Interpersonal Relations	9 (75%)	3 (25%)	100
MEASURES OF CENTER	YES	NOT	TEACHER STRATEGIES	YES	NOT	TOTAL
Addressed to student	6 (50%)	6 (50%)	Preventive strategies	10 (83%)	2 (16,7%)	100
Addressed to teachers	8 (66,66%)	4 (33,3%)	Intervention strategies	11 (91,66%)	1 (8,33%)	100
Measures of the center	11 (91,66%)	1 (8,33%)				

5. Conclusions

The results obtained from both the analysis of the questionnaires and the panel of experts was useful for the design and the structure of the final instrument that we suggested, giving content validation to it, too. In this sense, our final instrument tried to give answer to the gaps and the shortages in the content as well as in the structure and design, which were found in the results of the questionnaire analysis; just like to include those beneficial and relevant aspects for our instrument and research. Furthermore, the research was enriched by the comments taken from the panel of experts. We departed from a terminology that gathered together the key words that would help to understand the main purpose of the questionnaire and of our research: "Questionnaire about school coexistence and formative training of the teaching staff". We established a specific rather than global purpose, like those in the analysis of the questionnaires that was related to the objectives as well as to the dimensions and contents which were part of the questionnaire. Variables were also defined and subsequently translated to aspects with an order and a sequence establishing in this way categories of information.

Additionally, the results support some of the data of former studies that point out the teacher as a main and essential character in issues related to conflict management (Vacas et al., 2012; Ceballos et al., 2012). Due to this fact, it is necessary to opt for adequate teachers' training. At the same time, considering that in the current context there is an increase in concern about social and school coexistence, the deterioration of relationships and the educational environment in schools, we should go in depth with the measures and elements that contribute to improve school coexistence. To sum up, we should analyze all aspects involved confronting and managing conflicts according to some of the studies cited as foundational (Cascón, 2001). The figure of the teaching staff is essential in this sense and it is crucial a suitable training in values and measure development that could be undertaken at the school and teaching level in order to manage coexistence, specially to the transmission and implementation of intervention and prevention strategies, just like we deduce from the explained data.

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